

ones. It is in reality no more identified with the one than with the other; its essential sublimity is as incapable of being reduced to littleness, as its purity is of uniting with vice. But it may have a vital connection with a weak mind, while it necessarily disowns a wicked one; and the qualities of that mind with which it confessedly unites itself, will much more seem to adhere to it, than of that with which all its principles are plainly in antipathy. It will be more natural to take those persons who are acknowledged the real subjects of its influence, as illustrations of its nature, than those on whom it is the heaviest reproach that they pretend to be its friends. The perception of its nature and dignity must be clear and absolute, in the man who can observe it under the appearance it acquires in intimate combination with the thoughts, feelings, and language of its disciples, without ever losing sight of its own essential qualities and lustre. No possible associations indeed can diminish the grandeur of some parts of the Christian system. The doctrine of immortality, for instance, cannot be reduced to take even a transient appearance of littleness, by the meanest or most uncouth words and images that shall ever be employed to represent it. But some other things in the system have not the same obvious philosophic dignity; and these are capable of acquiring, from the mental defects of their believers, such associations as will give a character much at variance with our ideas of magnificence, to so much as they constitute of the evangelical economy. One of the causes therefore which I meant to notice, as having excited in persons of taste a sentiment unfavourable to the reception of evangelical religion, is, that this is the religion of many weak and uncultivated minds.

The schools of philosophy have been composed of men of superior faculties and extensive accomplishments, who could sustain, by eloquence and capacious thought, the dignity of the favourite themes; so that the proud distinctions of the disciples and advocates appeared as the attributes of the doctrines. The adepts could attract refined and aspiring spirits by proclaiming, that the temple of *their* goddess was not profaned by being a rendezvous for vulgar men. On the contrary, it is the beneficent distinction of the gospel, that though it is of a magnitude to interest and to surpass angelic investigation (and therefore

assuredly to pour contempt on